

NCA
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AKOSH CHERNUSH

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FINLAND: A TOUCH OF EUROCOMMUNISM

ANNCR:

A DISCUSSION HAS STARTED AMONG FINNISH COMMUNISTS ABOUT DIFFERENT MODELS OF SOCIALISM. VOA'S AKOSH CHERNUSH PREPARED THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

NOT MANY IN THE WEST MIGHT HAVE NOTICED THAT FINNISH COMMUNISTS, IN A SMALL WAY, HAD ENTERED INTO A EUROCOMMUNIST-STYLE DIALOGUE IF THE SOVIET NEWSPAPER PRAVDA (ON SEPTEMBER 2) HAD NOT ATTACKED THE FINNISH COMMUNIST PARTY PAPER, KANSAN UUTISET, FOR GIVING SPACE TO WHAT PRAVDA CALLED "OPINIONS CONTRARY TO THE INTERESTS OF SOCIALISM".

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN FINLAND, OF COURSE, INTEREST THE WEST AS WELL AS THE EAST. INDEED, HELSINKI'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS GIANT NEIGHBOR, THE SOVIET UNION, HAS ADDED A NEW TERM TO THE VOCABULARY OF 20TH CENTURY DIPLOMACY -- "FINLANDIZATION." AND SOME WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE EXPRESSED APPREHENSION THAT UNLESS THEY REAFFIRM THEIR UNITY WITHIN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND NATO, THEY MIGHT FIND THEMSELVES LESS INDEPENDENT WITH RESPECT TO THE SOVIET UNION.

FOR EAST EUROPEANS HOWEVER, "FINLANDIZATION" MEANS SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT. EAST GERMAN, CZECHOSLOVAK, HUNGARIAN, AND POLISH INTELLECTUALS, DURING PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS, OFTEN SUGGEST THAT THEY WOULD HAPPILY SETTLE FOR A "FINLANDIZED" SITUATION. EAST EUROPEANS POINT OUT THAT WHILE FINLAND IS NOT A NEUTRAL COUNTRY IN THE SWISS SENSE OF THAT WORD, IT'S ALSO TRUE THAT HELSINKI DOES NOT HAVE TO FOLLOW THE SOVIET ECONOMIC MODEL

EITHER. THAT DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR FINLAND TO ENJOY ONE OF THE WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARDS OF LIVING. IN FACT, FINLAND TODAY RANKS AMONG THE WORLD'S TOP 12 INDUSTRIAL NATIONS.

ONE REASON FOR SOVIET TOLERANCE OF FINNISH FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ITS OWN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS IS SAID TO BE THAT THE FINNISH LEADERSHIP ENCOURAGED THE COMMUNISTS TO TAKE PART IN PUBLIC LIFE. IN THAT CONTEXT, THE COMMUNISTS' LEFTIST COALITION PARTY, CALLED THE PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE, ALMOST NEVER OPPOSED MOSCOW, EXCEPT IN 1968, WHEN IT PASSED A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE SOVIET-LED INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

HOWEVER, TEN YEARS LATER, THE PARTY'S NEWSPAPER, KANSAN UUTISET HAS UNEXPECTEDLY STARTED A DISCUSSION ABOUT EUROCOMMUNISM, THE PERSECUTION OF SOVIET DISSIDENTS, AND THE VIEWS OF EAST GERMAN ECONOMIST RUDOLF BAHRO, WHO WAS RECENTLY CONDEMNED TO 8 YEARS OF JAIL. FOR EXAMPLE, ARTICLE BY ILKKA CHRISTIAN BJORKLUND, ONE OF THE YOUNG PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LEFTIST COALITION, EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT UNDER THE SOVIET SYSTEM SOCIALISM IS STILL IN ITS "LARVA STAGE AND CAN'T MATURE INTO REAL SOCIALISM BECAUSE OF THE PARTY BUREAUCRACY ITSELF."

THE FINNISH PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE AT FIRST CONDEMNED THE KANSAN UUTISET'S ARTICLES. HOWEVER, PARTY CHAIRMAN AARNE SAARINEN, WHO IN THE PAST HAS NEVER BUDGED FROM THE PARTY LINE, THIS TIME WELCOMED AND ENCOURAGED THE DEBATE, WHICH THE FINNS CALL DISCUSSION ABOUT "DIFFERENT MODELS OF SOCIALISM" BUT WHICH PRAVDA CRITICIZED AS AN ANTI-COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN.

WJL/PY